

Emotionally Charged Words

A Self-Assessment Exercise

Below is a list of some words that, for many people, can be emotionally charged. Take a look at the list and put a check mark by any word that is a “red flag” word for you. Then go ahead and add to the list any other words that are emotionally charged for you, or that you have found to frequently affect others.

	You should, have to, have got to, are supposed to, must ...		Irresponsible
	You're a failure.		You lack ...
	Slowpoke		Your weaknesses are ...
	Stupid, dumb		You never, you always ...
	I demand ...		You fail to understand ...
	Every time you ...		You claim ...
	You do this all the time.		You are confused.
	Rude		Sissy
	Thoughtless		

Now that you have identified your “red flag” words, think for a moment about what happens when you hear one of these words or phrases directed at you in a conversation. What internal process do you go through?

Do your reactions match any of the following examples? If so, check the ones that do and then develop a plan to deal with the behavior the next time it occurs.

_____ I say to myself, “He’s right, I’m stupid, I guess I’ll never be able to get things done right.”

_____ “Who is she to talk to me that way? I’ll show her.”

_____ I stop thinking and my emotions take over, which interferes with my listening to much of what the other person is saying.

_____ I become defensive and start thinking of ways to justify my behavior.

_____ I identify with my negative behavior or mistake and feel that I’m really not “OK.”